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Ornaments, calabashes, pottery.

C. UTENSILS.

Nature, which has provided the Ba-Ronga with skins of animals for clothing, and with poles, reeds, grasses and fibrous barks for their habitations, has also favoured them with several exceedingly useful trees of which they have not been slow to take advantage. Of these the most valuable is the *milala* palm, *(Hyphaene crinita)* used for nearly all basket-work ; next comes the *nkuhlu (Trichilia emetica)* whose wood is particularly serviceable for all descriptions of carving. She has also deposited in their plains beds of clay, of more or less desirable quality, which they use for making pottery. I shall begin with the latter. 824

I. *Pottery.*

An excellent clay is to be found at Shibindji, in the neighbourhood of Lourenço Marques, a district close to Morakwen, and the people of this place — they are the same who abstain from eating any animal liver (I. p. 364) — are the potters who supply the whole country. They are said to be the masters (benyi) of the art. But clay is found in many other places, in Shifukundju, Mpatshiki, etc. It is said that the clay of Muweri, near Lemon Island, on the Lower Nkomati, is even better than that of Shibindji. So the art of the potter does not belong to a single family, and is not hereditary. Any one may learn it and practise it. Pottery amongst the Thongas is essentially woman's province. Is this because earthenware utensils are principally used in the kitchen, where woman's sway is paramount and indisputed? Possibly ; in any case it is so. 134 323 323

Let us suppose then that the mother of a family wishes to renew, or to add to her stocks of pots, large and small. She starts out for the marshes, picks up in the well-known hollow several clods of clay and returns to the village carrying them on her head. No one salutes her : everyone pretends not to see her, 323 777

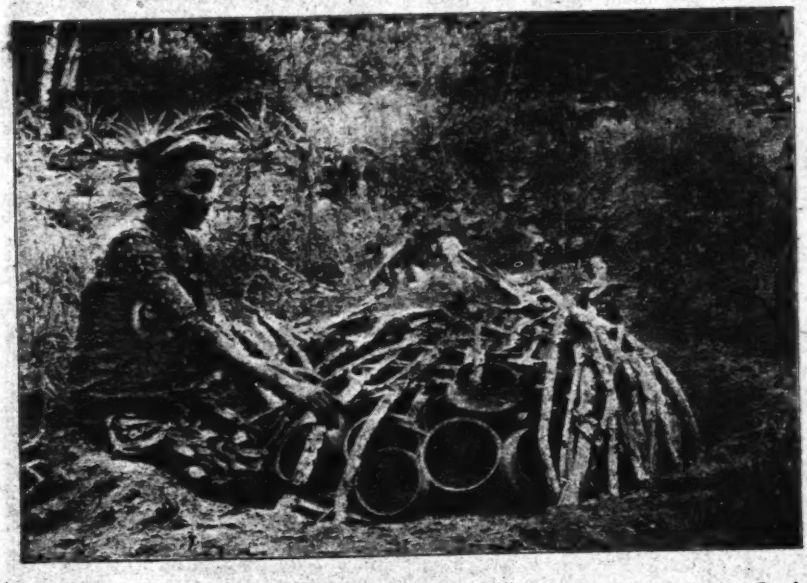
323 doubtless to avoid bringing any ill luck to the venture! She
777 buries the clay at the foot of a tree to keep it moist, and only takes it out of its hiding-place on the day on which she has decided to start the work.

323 Let us see by means of some photographs, taken by the greatly regretted A. Borel, how Meta, a Shibindji girl, married in Rikatla, proceeds in her work. Placing a broken piece of an old pot in the

Fashioning the pots. *Phot. A. Borel*

mortar, she pounds it until it is reduced to small fragments, the size of a grain of maize : these she mixes with her clay, adding water and sand, and kneads the whole together until she has made it into a very soft ball. She makes a hole in this, a wide opening which she enlarges by degrees, hollowing it out more and more and
323 gradually giving it the shape she wishes. I have already alluded
352 to the clever way in which the Blacks trace the circumference of a circle on the ground (I. p. 126) ; the same natural instinct enables them to model perfect spheres. It is astonishing to see the beautiful symmetry of these utensils, although these pots are fashioned without the aid of a wheel or measuring instrument of any kind.

323 The jar, still soft and wet, is put on one side. Now is the time to decorate it with very simple designs, generally triangular, after which the industrious worker leaves it to dry for a few hours, taking care to cover the opening with a thin piece of wood to prevent the wind from spoiling the shape. As soon as she dares to lift it without danger, she turns it over, smooths the bottom (tshaku), which will harden in its turn, and places the



Constructing the furnace. *Phot. A. Borel.*

pot in a hut where it continues to dry in the shade. On the day she chooses for the firing, she digs a hole in the sand, arranges the various pieces of pottery in it and covers them with a heap of small pieces of wood or with palm pith ; this she sets alight, and keeps a quick clear fire burning until she considers the firing is finished, when she leaves her red and glowing utensils to cool down (hola). The cooling accomplished, she begins to inspect the result of her work. This is the psychological moment! How many have cracked, how many have withstood the testing? The worthless ones are smashed, and the perfect ones reserved to be

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painted a brilliant brown, which is done with a decoction of the bark of the mangrove (nkapa) and of the nkanye, boiled with a kind of creeper (mahlehlwa), which has a sticky sap. Such is the primitive method followed in the manufacture of all Native pottery. 323 386

The process of firing being often unsuccessful, taboos are plentiful in the manufacture. When women collect the clay, 323 777

The furnace ready. *Phot. A. Borel.*

only one of them digs and gives it to the others ; should each make haste to dig for herself, this would bring mishap : the pots would break. If no accident happens and the firing is successful, these women will say : "She who dug the other day has a lucky hand (a ni boko dja hombe). Let her dig again another time." When the clay has been hidden in the ground, at the foot of a tree, it is also taboo to tread on the spot, when walking through the village. When the heap of wood is ready, the potteress will call a little child, an innocent creature, to set fire to the furnace. She shows it where to place the glowing ember,

323 777 and, if the result of the firing is good, she will always call the same child on future occasions (1).

787 If all these precautions prove useless, and the woman sees that she is not succeeding, she will go so far as to consult the bones, and, if they so order, she will make an offering to her gods, gods of the father, gods of the mother, or possessing gods (Part VI), if she is a spirit-possessed woman, as the bones may

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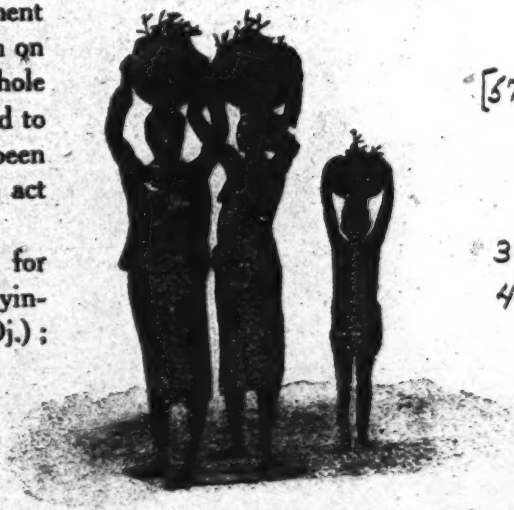
Result of the firing. *Phot. A. Borel.*

787 declare. People will say to her : "You manufacture pots and sell them and do not give anything to your gods : that will not do!" So she will offer a piece of clothing, a coin, etc., at the altar *(gandjelo)*.

323 476 (1) Meta, the Rikatla potteress has entirely given up the manufacture of pottery of late years. All her pots cracked, because, she said, she was the only woman practising this art in the country. In her former home, everybody made pots and in this way the potteresses "strengthened each other (tiyisana)." Moreover when a pot was heard cracking in the furnace, somebody ran to the hut and collected a little of the dust on the floor and threw it into the other pots, and this prevented them from being spoiled. It was too far for Meta to run to her former home to get the dust—so she gave up her trade! The case of poor Meta is a good illustration of the collective character of industrial pursuits amongst primitive peoples.

Another taboo in connection with the making of a pot is this: when a pot has been fired, it must still be *tested*; this operation is called *ku khangula*, or *kwangula*, and is performed in the following way. A little water is poured into it, and the potteress washes it thoroughly; then some grains of maize are cooked in it and thrown away. This is to remove the *nkwangu*, or *nkhangu*, viz., the danger attending the use of an untested, unpurified pot: people using such an implement would suffer from an eruption on the arms, and even on the whole body. To give any one food to eat from a pot which has not been *khangula* is looked on as an act of hatred.



Phot. D. Lenoir.

Pots used to draw water.

The pot, or boiler, used for cooking is called *nhlambeto* (yin-tin, Ro.) or *mbita* (yin-tin Dj.); it has a very wide opening. Smaller boilers are also made, even quite diminutive ones called *shihlembetwana* or *shimbitana*. The beer jar (khuwana, dji-ma), illustrated on page 101, No. 13, is of the same size as the boiler, but can be easily recognised by its straighter neck. Enormous beer jars are sometimes manufactured, perfect amphoras (hotjo, yin-tin), but they rarely stand the firing and are therefore scarce and expensive, fetching as much as ten shillings each: they may be two feet high; the ordinary cooking pot does not cost more than sixpence. The porringers, or large plates, are called *mbenga* (mu,-mi; No. 12) (1).

Shibindji clay is also used for making very short *pipes* (shipana), prettily shaped, probably in imitation of the European cutty. Smoking does not seem to be an indigenous habit; in the interior

(1) No. 11, on page 101, shows a small vase modelled by a young Native girl, an invalid from Natal (Station of Inanda).